

Schism

The Battle for Darracia

Michael Phillip Cash

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Dedication

To Mom

who taught her children to reach for the stars

“Life is either a great big adventure or nothing.”

-Helen Keller

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If you find this book enjoyable, I really hope you'll leave a review on Amazon, Goodreads or Barnes & Noble under Schism: The Battle for Darracia. If you have any questions or comments, please contact me directly at

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Praise for Michael Phillip Cash's debut book, *Brood X: A Firsthand Account of the Great Cicada Invasion*

- Simple, straightforward, flashlight-on-the-face campfire tale meant to induce nightmares." - **Mark McLaughlin - ForeWord Reviews**
- "Cash has written a harrowing tale of survival against all odds of a supernatural nature. As summer gets hot, *Brood X* will cool you down by sending chills down your back." - **Nina Schuyler, Author - The Translator**
- "Part creature-feature with all of the traditional elements of the great 50s films...part homage to the fairly recent genre of found-footage horror films-- *Brood X* is a quick, fun read." - **Michael R. Collings - hellnotes.com**
- "A Twilight Zone-like horror story of biblical proportions." - **Mark McLaughlin - Foreward Reviews**
- "Horror at its best...up close and personal, and inflicted with ways that address humanity's inherent fear of and disgust for bugs." - **Mark McLaughlin - ForeWord Reviews**
- "Breathing new life into a genre that has been occupied too long by the usual suspects: sickness, the undead and global warming." - **Kirkus Review**

Critics love Cash's paranormal romance novel, *Stillwell: A Haunting on Long Island*

- *"Cash easily draws readers into the story by creating three-dimensional characters who are easy to care about...thriller meets love story in a novel where characterization shines...with strong characters and a twist unexpected in a thriller, this book is an enjoyable beach read."* - **ForeWord Reviews**
- *"Michael Phillip Cash is creating a niche in the pantheon of successful young writers of the day."* – **Grady Harp, Amazon Top Reviewer**
- *"Stillwell has all the gothic type elements of the old great books with some of the new and satisfying elements that make it very readable and enjoyable."* – **The Gothic Wanderer**
- *"A great read! Mr. Cash, I foresee more fast paced, thrillers in your future. A well written story with engaging characters."* – **MyBookAddiction Reviews**
- *"Stillwell is a book that will keep you on the edge of your seat all the way through...it is one of the best books I have read in years."* – **Chronicles from a Caveman**
- *"A horror tale with well-developed characters..."* - **Kirkus Review**

- *"I do not see what would stop Michael Phillip Cash's horror masterpiece from becoming a bestseller." - ***pjtheemt.blogspot.com****

schism - 's(k)izəm/

noun

1. a split or division between strongly opposed sections or parties, caused by differences in opinion or belief.

Book One

Chapter 1

"Pay attention, your highness." The navigator implored the disinterested young man who gazed out of the wall of windows. "Prince V'sair please... your father had demanded." The teacher pointed to the mathematical example that hung mid air, ignored and not solved. He raised his arm reluctantly, and the numbers dissolved instantly to be replaced by a history lesson. The lad loved that subject, surely he would finish something today!

The teen turned, his blazing white hair a nimbus around his

lean, wolf like face. A pale, thin braid trailed down his strong back. Only males in the royal family wore them. He was a handsome male, whipcord lean, with a high forehead, and bright blue eyes that studied his tutor with growing disdain.

"Emmicus, my head aches with your numbers and sums. I know the speed of time, inside and out. I can calculate the distance to travel to Fon Reni get our mid meal and be home in time for chay with my mother. I am weary of this."

The older man approached his young charge, sympathy in his rheumy eyes. "Yes, yes, I know, your highness, your wit is brighter than our own Rast," he bowed his head reverently and watched the boy do the same as they repeated together,

"Great Sradda, giver of all life and love, we commend ourselves to thee."

Together they made an arc of their forefingers that touched the breastbone of their chest. There was a minute of silence, so thick the air vibrated and the tutor, lost in prayer, failed to see the younger man looking up and out the giant, clear wall again. He heard the sigh, and climbed out of his peaceful state. The boy was not himself today, the pained look was in his face once again. He loved this man-child as if

he had sprung from his own loins and had been given the charge of him from the time he left his mother's womb. He had taught him to dress, read, fight, ride the wild stallion, tamed for only the noble class and royalty. He had taught him to wipe his own ass, and then his nose, making sure he didn't contaminate the two.

Gently, he tried again, "V'sair, what is it my son?" he asked kindly, moving close to him for privacy. Though they were alone in the room, their voices sometimes carried throughout the great auditorium.

The prince looked at his elderly teacher. How to say it without hurting him? Emmicus had protected him from his father's wrath when he failed to do his work and hid him when his uncle played his dirty power games.

He was a half breed, the only one in the Kingdom of Darracia. Was it his fault his father, the King Drakko had traveled to Planta as a young man and married the first female he had seen there? His father defied his tribe, cast aside his betrothed, his royal oath and taken for a wife, the orange tattooed daughter of his grandfather's greatest enemy. He had found her on a mission to Planta, a world where many of the Darracian warriors met a watery death in its boundless ocean. Drakko fought and won the heart of

Reminda, princess of Adon, the lush island surrounded by a great, green sea. He had stolen her away, first fighting her father and then his own, to be with her. It was his greatest battle, and she his favorite prize of war.

V'sair was a freak. While his father had the pebbled gray skin of the Darracian race, his skin was tan, with a hint of blue to match the silvery blue eyes he'd inherited from his mother. Built like his mother, he was long limbed and graceful looking, not nearly as tall as the rest of the male Darracians. His skin was smooth and hairless, making him feel like a pet rather than an offspring. He knew his father loved him as fiercely as he loved his mother, but did he trust him? Did he have faith in his abilities? A boy, nay a man of his age should have learned the Secrets of the Sradda. The ceremony was long overdue and did not look to ever occur. He was older than many of his cousins, yet he had not been given the Fireblade, or spent the night locked with the elders learning the lesson that would turn him into a warrior. It was a right of passage that marked a Darracian man's journey to adulthood. It was as if a club was created and he was not allowed in. He was no better than the Quayroo, imprisoned on the Desa, left to live in the treetops to hunt and forage for food many miles from his kingdom.

"I might as well color my skin red and braid my hair," he muttered angrily.

"Nonsense young sir! Nonsense..." the older man followed and placed a warm hand on his shoulder. "You are royal born!" He caught V'sair's angry glare.

"No one can take that away from you. You are the descendant of the most high Darracian, Carnor the First. His life force strums in your veins."

"Pah. I am equally the product of my mother's clan."

"Less so, V'sair! You have been brought up here among wealth and knowledge. You have studied hard and know the Sradda Doctrines better than anyone else. You are as brave as you are smart. I am proud to have you as a pupil."

"Only you see it Emmicus. The Secrets, I want to take part in the ceremony. I fear they will never let me take up the Fireblade. I am being left behind. They are going to make me a...a navigator." His face blushed blue when he realized he insulted his best ally. "I mean... there's nothing wrong with being a navigator, it's an important job, Emmicus.."

"V'sair, V'sair, stop. I know you are not meant to be a scholar." He turned the younger man to face him. "You are a warrior, with a warrior's life-force, Great Sradda willing,"

they both bowed their heads respectfully. "Your time will come. I know, but for now, how about we recite the Sradda? If you won't do my lessons, then give your old navigator some pleasure and tell me about the creation."

V'sair looked at the hope lighting his teacher's face. The Sradda Doctrine was just a jumble of words to him now. He had prayed for years and had been denied the one thing he wanted more than anything else. He'd rather be out, riding Hother, the purebred stallion his mother had presented him just last year. He loved to bury his face in the white velvet neck, then take off and glide through the atmosphere, holding on for dear life. Hother flew above the treetops, her hooves sparking with energy when they landed.

He thought he should abdicate for his older half-brother. If only they would let him. Zayden was full-blooded Darracian, and one of the best warriors in the army. Anyone would be happy to follow him, the plain fact of his illegitimacy making it impossible to inherit. V'sair was destined to be the future king whether he wanted it or not. He opened his mouth to complain, but when he saw Emmicus's eager face, he began the first calls to the Sradda Doctrine, hoping the melodious cadence of the tale of his ancestors, his birthright, would calm his aching heart. He walked around the vast chamber,

his booted feet making scuffing sounds on the polished floor. It was a huge room and he moved to position himself, so that his voice would echo from the vaulted ceiling. He knew this room in and out, had studied there with Emmicus for almost everyday of his nineteen years. He was way past the age for a schoolroom, most of his boyhood friends and cousins had already taken their places in the army. He frowned, knowing he rode better than any of them, his lithe frame made him agile, and fast, their Darracian bulk weighing them down. He touched his braid thoughtfully, opened his mouth, and instead of the first prayer, he continued his argument as if they had never stopped. "I disagree with my father, Emmicus. You know I could hold my own against any of my cousins, I know I could." He implored his tutor.

Emmicus bowed his craggy head, "It is true, you have Planta agility. You are fleet of foot," he moved close to the younger man and tapped the smooth forehead with his wrinkled finger. "It's what is here that is important, V'sair. You have to be able to outwit your enemy." V'sair pulled away angrily. He moved his finger to the boy's heaving chest and touched the area over his heart, gently, "You have to use tools other than brawn to lead. Your father and I have discussed this. If you are to command, you must do it with your heart and

soul and mind. Anyone can fight, V'sair! This trinity with the Elements alone will make you a leader. The greatest in the history of Darracia. Now, if you please... the Song of Sradda."

V'sair looked up at the ceiling, not knowing if his voice would crack with emotion. He was frustrated with Emmicus, his father and the entire planet. Tossing his braid behind him, he put his hand on the cold pane of glass overlooking the cloud city, and began, his voice a whisper, "The Three Elements were designed by the Creator. Molded from ether, He grew them from the nothingness of space, to pulse with the knowledge of the ages to bring life to all our worlds. Lovingly formed, with noble intention, they were dispatched by the Creator." Here he bowed his head as he was taught to do, making the arc of life from his fingers to his breastbone, his voice growing stronger, more confident, the words vibrating thought his heart, his mouth reciting the words, but his thoughts on the elusive Fireblade. Emmicus watchfully mirrored him. "The one who created our living Universe." A five millisecond pause, and he began again. "It was up to these three Elements to leave behind a Universe of order. While they were created for the good of all-kind, one must earn it, work for it, for the Creator brings the

spark only to those that deserve it. These are the tools, the conduit and I shall name them...Ozre,"

Emmicus chanted after him, "Ozre, Ozre Light the path..."

V'sair continued, "Ozre, Ozre light the path...Ozre, oh, great Element of Earth. Ozre who swirled the dust in its path and with this the rocks were created. The rocks were heated into stars, the stars gave birth to planets. Joining like particles of life in the air, they began their orbit, and Ozer was happy. Ozer's joy begat Ereth, Ereth...giver of life."

Again the older man repeated the refrain, his eyes an odd glow of one wrapped in prayer, lost in the moment of deep thought. V'sair noted it with a smile, but continued the ritual, knowing he was so very well trained and his voice filled the room. He was a good Yoman, a born speaker who could call people to prayer and make the unbelievers holy once more. If only it worked for him.

"Ereth, the Element of water, giver of oceans and lakes and rivers to divide the lands. To make the Desa grow. To create the waters for the spark of life to grow. And Ereth's joy begat Ine."

"Ozre begat Ereth, Ereth begat Ine, Ine mother of life..."
Emmicus was swaying, his body vibrating lost in the

pleasure of prayer.

“Ine, the Element of Life, giver of the planets their seed of life. The first breath of existence as we know. Creator to Ozre to Ereth to Ine, one is powerless without the other. Each connected with the spirit of life. One without the other is not whole. The Trivium is whole. The Elements are whole.”

His voice soared to the eaves of the great ceiling, his bell like tenor filling the chamber with the music of Darracian soul. Detached, he watched Emmicus, his tutor’s face rapt with the music of the words, knowing he affected the older man deeply. He wished the words could do the same for him. While he recited with all the passion that the navigator had immersed into him, the prayers meant nothing. He longed to understand what others felt, wondering if his tainted blood played a role. Though his voice was rich, he felt empty. Perhaps he was not really Darracian.

He continued softly, “And the Creator left behind his most important gift. The Trivium, our Elements. Though He is all knowing, He left these sentinels to guide us, watch us, empower us. As they moved around the newly created stars and sprinkled the seeds of life, they bathe us with their light. Each with their own color of light from the spectrum of the

all-knowing. A shining orb of red, glowing hot, for the birth of strength; blue, ice cold for the reason of justice, and green; for the freedom of choice. These three spirits left behind by the Creators for us, only us, to grow, learn and be dominant. They are the Universal subconscious. They are the all-powerful. Without them we are nothing.”

He just wished he could believe they were really there.

Chapter 2

The door opened and his mother entered in a flurry of